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# Schools seek payment for destroyed equipment

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A reimbursement check could be cut this week to cover the cost of Libby schools athletic equipment destroyed last fall at the behest of the Environmental Protection Agency, a local EPA coordinator said Monday.

The athletic equipment, along with both the high school and middle school tracks, was found to be contaminated by asbestos fibers.

Federal red tape has delayed the replacement of the \$41,594 equipment, said EPA on-site coordinator Paul Peronard, adding that a treasury check will be sent to the district this week. The agency also will name a contracting firm to rebuild the tracks later this week, Peronard said.

"Anyone who has ever worked in government knows what this is like," Peronard said. "Nothing is ever simple on this job."

A government auditor sent the reimbursement plans back for review more than a month ago after he decided some of the procedures may not comply with federal regulations.

"The auditor thought some of the items looked a little funny and that the government maybe shouldn't be replacing them," Peronard said. "But this is something we've been doing in Libby for years. The government is obligated to replace them or submit a reasonable cash-out."

A few of the items to be replaced include: javelins, pads, vault poles, tarps, stereo equipment, tools, runway mats, tackling sleds, hurdles and various physical education items.

The EPA has replaced most of the football equipment destroyed.

Reimbursement for many of the items is already too late, since the spring sports season began last month. The track sea-

son, for which many of the items would be used, started on March 11.

A letter sent to Peronard on March 14 from district superintendent Kirby Maki states that the district "acted in good faith when we accepted

Rik Rewerts,  
LHS athletics director

the recommendation of the (EPA) and allowed them to destroy all of the asbestos contaminated track and field equipment," and that "the EPA has not fulfilled their obligations to our school district and community."

The Libby High School track team is "at an extreme disadvantage" without the equipment and the opportunity to host home meets, Maki said. Track meets scheduled in Libby this year will be held at alternate sites. The March 5 Libby Invitational will be held in Kalispell.

"The problem is that we've left everybody in a lurch," Peronard said.

But Maki and athletics director Rik Rewerts hesitated to blame local EPA officials for the holdup.

"We're not blaming anybody," Rewerts said. "We just want our stuff back."

The district did not figure in shipping costs for the smaller items on the list, which could add another \$2,000-\$3,000 to the total cost, Rewerts said. And an estimated \$2,500 will be spent on traveling costs incurred because there are no home meets.

"One silver lining, though, is that once it's been replaced, we'll have a better facility," Rewerts said.

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